

Gentlemen,

I am Rob Romano. I am not only a swimming pool builder; I am also the current Past President of CONSPA and the President of the Northeast Spa and Pool Association AKA NESPA.

NESPA is the parent association of the northeast chapters that cover CT, the lower counties of New York State including Long Island, all of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania. I am here today to support Raised Bill 863, AAC Licensing of Swimming Pool Builders. I am here today because there is a real need for oversight and standards in the pool building industry.

As Al Rizzo mentioned, in recent years there have been some high profile instances of people becoming entrapped. I served my two year term for CONSPA from the fall of 2007 to the fall of 2009. I became President of the chapter only 2 months after the tragic death of a 6 year old boy in Greenwich CT, an accident that may have been avoided had everyone been educated and brought up to date on the current code. In Sept of 2004 the 2003 IRC Appendix G code went into effect in our state. The pool where the accident happened was constructed the following summer in 2005. It was built, inspected and received a certificate of occupancy. Then 2 years later the suction entrapment occurred. Without going into details of the accident we feel it could have been avoided if the builder had been aware of the changes made to the code through continuing Education. The key word here is EDUCATION.

Being a licensed builder is one thing, the education afforded to the license is priceless. NESPA and CONSPA are leading the way in educating our members from CT and the health code and building code inspectors. We recently won a contract from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to put together and deliver programs on the health and building codes and how they are impacted by the Federal Virginia Graeme Baker Swimming Pool Safety Act. We currently have 4 programs in the state of CT alone scheduled. The first one was actually held last week. With that said, the entire Appendix G section of the building code is only 1 ½ pages long. The entrapment section of the code we currently use is only a 1/2 page long but that page holds vital information on how to properly pipe a pool so it does not become a potential trap for swimmers.

It's amazing how many builders and inspectors in our state still do not understand this code. We have an opportunity here to help them both. We are the experts in our field. To instill this license and require continuing education will force the builders who don't know, to know.

Not just pool builders are building these pools. You have landscapers, masons and home builders who do not understand how to properly pipe the pool or even know what a split main suction outlet is or an SVRS. A Swimming pool builder "is a person who performs excavation and grading, construction and installation of a swimming pool and water features more than 24 inches in depth, tiling and coping, decking and installation of all circulation equipment including pumps, filters, and chemical feeders". Continuing Education will teach them how to do it correctly.

CT is in a unique situation in our region. We are currently the only state to hold a service license to work on swimming pools. To obtain this license one has to go through years of training that includes both classroom and field training.

We have a program in place through the Association of Pool and Spa Professionals to help train new swimming pool builders how to properly construct a swimming pool. This training is vital to the safe construction of the pool as it follows the current codes and standards on CT's books today. We recognize a need to "grandfather" the current builders in the state in order to obtain this license. In the end, it is the consumer who benefits the most from this license. They will have the peace of mind knowing that the professional pool builder is knowledgeable in his trade and will construct a pool that is safe for their children and guests. I support Raised Bill 863, AAC Licensing of Swimming Pool Builders and ask that you do to.

One last thing. The Service License (SP license) required to service the pool lacks one crucial item; Enforcement. We would like to see the same enforcement language applied to the SP license that is in this builder's license. It's necessary to the validity and integrity of the said license. We also feel the need to include Tile and Coping within the work performed definition. There are certain steps and criteria one needs to take in order to properly install these items on the shell of the pool; steps that can hinder the life span and quality of the installment if it is installed without the proper training and education.